

Remarks/Arguments:

This is a reply to the office action of May 23, 2005.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC 112

Claims 8, 12, 20 and 24 are being amended so as to omit the "such as" language to which the Examiner has objected.

Claim Rejections 35 USC 102/103

The Examiner is alleging that the subject-matter of the independent claims (claims 1 and 13) is anticipated by or is not obvious over the disclosure of Michael. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

The claimed invention requires *inter alia* that the imprint as applied to each item includes a sorting identifier.

In Michael, the Examiner considers the code identifier (14) to be the sorting identifier of the claimed invention.

There is, however, no suggestion that the code identifier (14) is used as a means of sorting the mail pieces (10). Rather, the code identifier (14) is used only as a means for uniquely identifying each respective mail piece (10), thereby enabling an association with a mail tray (22) and the tracking of that mail piece (10) through the tracking of the mail tray (22). It is not seen how mail pieces (10) could possibly be sorted into groups using the code identifiers (14), which must be unique, if the mail pieces (10) are to be individually identifiable.

The Examiner also apparently considers the function of the reader (26) to be that of reading the code identifiers (14) on the mail pieces (10) and communicating information as provided by the code identifiers (14) to the sorter (20), in order to allow for sorting of the mail pieces

(10) by the sorter (20) into respective mail trays (22). This is not the case.

Michael discloses that the code identifier (14) on a mail piece (10) is read as the mail piece (10) is placed within a mail tray (22) [column 1, lines 30 to 33], that is, subsequent to sorting.

Furthermore, Michael discloses that the reader (26) is associated with a mail tray (22), in one embodiment as part of the mail tray (22) [column 2, lines 62 to 64], and thus the reader (26) cannot conceivably act to read the mail pieces (10) prior to sorting, as, at that point, the mail pieces (10) would already have been sorted.

The claimed invention also requires *inter alia* the sorting of received items in accordance with a sorting protocol as determined from the sorting identifiers of the respective imprints.

Michael makes no suggestion whatsoever of the determination of the sorting protocol from the code identifiers (14). In Michael, the mail pieces (10) are sorted using a pre-defined sorting protocol, namely, by zip code [column 2, lines 58 to 61], which has no relation to the code identifier (14).

As such, the claimed invention is clearly distinguished over the disclosures of Michael.

As regards the dependent claims, these claims are dependent upon allowable independent claims, and, as such, are thus themselves allowable.

Conclusion

It is noted that the Examiner has identified a number of other prior art documents, and that these documents are apparently considered by the Examiner to be pertinent to the claimed invention.

In this regard, it is submitted that neither these documents, nor any of the other identified documents, disclose an item sorting system or method which provides *inter alia* for the

sorting of received items in accordance with a sorting protocol as determined from the sorting identifiers in imprints as applied to the items, in the manner as required by the claimed invention. Such a determination of the sorting protocol from sorting identifiers clearly distinguishes the claimed invention from the prior art documents.

Respectfully submitted,



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